Gabriel Luciani isn’t your average Charlotte Catholic student. His extensive resume alone sets him apart from the common crowd, but his vast knowledge of the film industry makes him one of a kind.

At only sixteen years old, Gabriel knows more about movies than many could hope to learn in an entire lifetime. Ask him anything about directing, cinematography, or even foreign films, and he will produce an answer beyond his years, packed full of details and personal insights.

Since the age of thirteen, Gabriel has devoted his time to the study of films, with aspirations of becoming a successful director. What sparked his interest? The answer might surprise you.

“I used to watch what everyone else watched, but in the summer of 2008, I saw *Jaws* on TV and something stuck out to me. I realized there was better quality in some films and after I began studying them, I decided it was something I wanted to pursue and create myself,” said Gabriel.

From that moment on, Gabriel’s love of films grew rapidly, and over the course of two years he has had the opportunity to experience many aspects of the industry firsthand.

Most recently, Gabriel landed a spot as an extra in the much anticipated film *The Hunger Games*, being released this month. Gabriel jumped at the chance to be in the movie, and was exposed to the complex process of making a film.

He and 200 other extras made up the District 12 set, where on the first day they spent nearly 16 hours on set, dressed in meticulously planned costumes. When not chatting with actor Josh Hutcherson, Gabriel waited for direction from director Gary Rossey, who shouted instructions through a megaphone in between takes.

Before his stint as an extra, however, Gabriel attended the Sundance Film Festival, held yearly in Park City, Utah. The festival is open to all, actors and movie-goers alike, and attendees watch the newest films in venues around the city.

“Sundance is much more inviting and casual than some other festivals, and everyone is treated equally, regardless of who they are. All of the theaters are located in the same vicinity; from high school gyms to hotels. There’s one main road and it’s an absolutely adorable city,” Gabriel said.

When he’s not attending festivals, Gabriel watches most movies through Netflix, and foreign films tend to be his favorites. It’s the emotional and thought-provoking films that often catch his eye and leave a lasting impression.

“The greatest films ever made were European 40’s and 50’s films. They are fundamentally vital to the cinema we see today. If a film can teach me something about humans, or enlighten me on how people think, then it is a true work of art. I want to bring back the original, methodic thought that went into those films,” Gabriel said.

Exposure to such events would make anyone eager to pursue a job in the film industry, and Gabriel is no exception. When he attends the University of North Carolina School of the Arts next year, he hopes to set the foundations for his career. He was one of 23 out of 200 applicants to get accepted and will enter the school’s visual arts program.